

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second re-inspection monitoring visit to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council following publication of the inspection report on 23 December 2015, which found the overall effectiveness of the provider to be inadequate.

At the inspection in November 2015, the effectiveness of leadership and management was judged inadequate. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for learners were judged to require improvement. Adult learning programmes and apprenticeships were both judged to require improvement.

Since the previous inspection, the Adult Community Education Service (ACES) has undergone a period of significant change due to a strategic and operational restructure. Leaders restructured the provision in June 2016. All new teams and processes were implemented from 1 August 2016.

Themes

Improvement in teaching, learning and assessment including English, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers continue to work hard to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Since the previous monitoring visit, the vast majority of tutors now make good use of the revised individual learning plan (ILP) and the learner progress tracker to monitor the progress and achievements of learners. Tutors now set learners specific targets in learning plans, which they diligently monitor, resulting in the large majority of learners making good progress on their courses.

Managers closely monitor the outcomes of learning walks and observations of teaching and learning. They moderate and oversee the resulting action plans and provide effective support to tutors to improve their practice. Tutors received useful training in the planning of learning and effective target-setting in learning plans from a colleague at the school improvement department. Tutors now use this knowledge well to improve their practice.

Governors and managers have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching of English, mathematics and ESOL classes. Significant changes in both staffing and management have resulted in a range of positive new initiatives, such as the creation of a dedicated assessment team to carry out assessment of learners' starting points. Consequently, managers and staff place a much greater focus on ensuring that they put learners on the right course at the right level to meet their

individual requirements, resulting in more current learners staying on their course than in previous years.

Improvement in the effectiveness of governance, Reasonable progress leadership and improvement planning arrangements

Since the previous re-inspection monitoring visit, leaders of the service have successfully recruited an experienced and committed governing body to contribute to the newly formed governance and improvement board. Newly recruited members of the board include teaching and learning specialists from the council's school improvement department and an assistant principal from a local college to support, challenge and hold senior managers to account to improve the service swiftly. The chair of the board has worked tirelessly to ensure that the skill set of each board member contributes to improving the outcomes of learners through concise roles, responsibilities and terms of reference.

Members of the governing body attend at least one of the two sub-committees to promote rapid improvement at the service, focusing on data, resources and finance, and curriculum and standards. The chair of each of these committees reports back to the main governing body on a monthly basis detailing the progress made, measured against a set of clearly defined objectives. These committees are instrumental in monitoring the progress that is being made against these objectives. Progress towards achieving these objectives is good. Governors also provide support to senior managers such as undertaking learning walks and organising training events to improve the quality of teaching at the service.

Governors now receive a range of reports and data to allow them to challenge senior managers appropriately to develop the quality of teaching and learning and ultimately improve the achievements of learners. Governors challenge managers on the performance of the service, but on too many occasions targets are not precise enough to enable them to hold managers to account to improve standards more swiftly.

Governors quickly highlighted the weak performance management of managers in the service and the lack of progress monitoring. Consequently, they have worked very closely with senior managers to address these weaknesses. However, notwithstanding these positive actions, further deterioration of English, mathematics and ESOL achievements was not averted.

Quality improvement planning, while much improved, still does not fully identify all of the actions that managers need to put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the service. For example, improvement actions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, detailed in supervision records with managers, are not detailed in quality improvement plans, resulting in governors not being aware of the progress made towards achieving these key improvement priorities.

Improvement in performance management and professional development arrangements **Significant progress**

Since the previous monitoring visit, senior managers have implemented fully the revised organisational restructure. They have also recently appointed an additional quality coordinator to support quality assurance and improvement processes within the service.

Managers have implemented a significant number of changes to performance management systems and processes. Tutors are now required to utilise learner tracker systems and revised individual learning plans (ILPs) to monitor and record individual progress and achievement. Managers review, monitor and standardise practice at regular meetings. Managers observe tutors through planned learning walks and observations of teaching sessions. Curriculum managers review the outcomes of these alongside learner trackers and ILPs at monthly meetings with staff. All staff receive an annual appraisal with a mid-year review where managers review performance against agreed targets. The rigorous application of these processes has resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. A higher proportion of learners now make good progress.

Two induction training events, which new staff attended before the start of the current academic programme, covered new service systems and processes as well as revisiting some basic teaching and learning skills and strategies. Managers have plans for further training and development activities at the end of each term during the year. Staff who teach functional skills have received training from a school improvement specialist in delivering functional skills. Consequently, staff now have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and specific development plans to support them in improving their teaching practice.

Improvement in the achievement and progress monitoring of all learners **Reasonable progress**

Data provided by managers indicates that there has been an improvement in the proportion of learners who completed their courses and achieved their qualifications in 2015/16 compared with the previous year. Data suggests that there has been a significant improvement in non-accredited courses. However, the proportion of learners who gained accredited qualifications declined in 2015/16, with approximately one third of all learners not achieving their qualification. Managers acknowledge particularly poor performance in English, mathematics and ESOL qualifications because of weak progress monitoring. Since the restructure of the service in June 2016, managers have taken decisive action to address these weaknesses. Inspectors will evaluate their impact at the next monitoring visit.

Managers and staff have successfully implemented the pilot projects recorded at the previous monitoring visit across the whole service in the current year; these allow managers to have a thorough understanding of the progress that learners are making. Managers have created a rigorous reporting structure for tutors to provide timely information on learners' progress to the newly formed data management

team. The data team now produces timely information for governors and managers to monitor the progress that learners make. Weekly management meetings take place to discuss the progress of all learners and plan suitable interventions for those learners who are not making at least their expected progress. While it is too soon to judge the full impact of the changes, early indicators are positive.

Improvement in the curriculum to meet local employment and skills priorities

Significant progress

Senior managers now have more effective links and contacts with the council's cabinet and are better able to respond to meet local authority priorities. The service achieves this by carefully targeting provision in the neighbourhoods with the highest levels of both social and economic deprivation, as well as targeting schools with high levels of children receiving free school meals. The family learning provision supports the development of functional skills in English and mathematics, ESOL and parenting skills. A combination of activities, aimed at parents and children, provide a good range of opportunities to engage with these hard-to-reach communities.

Managers have developed good links with a local Jobcentre Plus to deliver a range of employability programmes to meet their mandated customers' needs, as well as other voluntary attendees. These include completing assessments leading to courses in English and mathematics, intensive information technology courses, 'job start' for long-term unemployed and 'easy start' aimed at single parents needing to return to the labour market.

The service offers provision in childcare and hair and beauty to support their 'skills for work' programmes. They have also developed a level 1 course in hairdressing and beauty to prepare learners for progression to a full level 2 qualification, which they require to gain employment.

Managers have developed stronger links with other local providers, employers and colleges to ensure that they all take a more coordinated approach to curriculum planning and delivery. The service has a formal agreement with the local college for the referral of learners so that they can progress to higher levels of study.

Improvement in data management systems

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have continued to enhance data management systems to ensure that managers have accurate information to allow them to make informed decisions to improve the service further. Managers now receive regular and extensive data on the progress and achievement of learners, allowing them to react swiftly where areas of underperformance are identified.

Managers have been successful in changing the culture of staff within the service. They set ambitious targets to ensure that the newly formed data team receives accurate and timely information on learners' progress. Consequently, managers and governors now receive timely reports on progress to inform their decisions. Where

learners make slow progress, managers work very closely with tutors to implement swift interventions to ensure that learners catch up and achieve their learning goals.

Although managers monitor gaps in the progress and achievement of different groups of learners, they do not detail sufficiently the actions they will take to reduce these gaps. Consequently, governors are not holding senior managers to account for reducing these gaps.

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